Look-East Policy

655. SHRI KUMAR DEEPAK DAS: Will the Minister of DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that with an aim to strengthen the old linkage with our neighbourhood, Government conceptualized the Look-East policy;

(b) the steps Government has taken so far to implement such policy, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government has given a dedicated and committed look towards its strategic NE Region for the Look-East policy to bring result;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (e) India's relationship with Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is central to her Look East Policy. The Look East Policy of the Government of India has been evolving since early 1990s and India has significantly deepened her interaction with ASEAN. The rationale of Government of India's Look East Policy and its desire to expand relations with South East Asia and East Asia have emanated from:

– the imperative of developing stable political and economic partnerships in the post-Cold War world.

– the need to integrate with South East and East Asia whose economies have immense potential as partners for a dynamic Indian economy on a high growth path, and

– the imperative of developing India's relations with a region where there is room for expansion of India's economic space, which may be to the mutual benefit of India and these countries.

The Look East Policy has allowed India to take advantage of new opportunities in trade and investment. The results of India's "Look East" policy are amply demonstrated in her growing economic interaction with the region. India's trade with ASEAN has risen from US $ 2.4 billion in 1990 to US $ 23 billion in 2005. India's trade with the countries of the East Asia has, similarly risen from US $ 8 billion in 1990 to US $ 67.6 billion in 2005. This accounts for nearly 30% of the external trade. At the same time, the period has also seen an increase in FDI flows, both from India to the region and from the region into India.

As the North Eastern region of the country shares a land border with Myanmar, several cross-border development projects in diverse areas such as roads, railways, telecommunications, IT, science & technology, power, etc. are underway so as to improve the region's connectivity and market access for the benefit of the North-Eastern region. Recently, India concluded negotiations on a free trade agreement (FT) with the Asean bloc, which will create a market of over 1.5 billion people in the region including North-East Region also. The Look East policy is pursued in a multi-faceted manner. Government supports the idea of benefiting to remote regions of North East under Look East Policy.

Some of the important developments in the Look East Policy, *interalia*, relate to initiating/resuming dialogue/trade with the following neighbouring countries:

China

Promotion of border trade at Nathu La pass in Sikkim.

Bangladesh

(i) The issue of declaring Ashuganj, in Bangladesh, as a Port of Call was discussed by the Government of India under the Protocol for Inland Water Transit and Trade (IWTT) on May 26-27, 2008 with the Government of Bangladesh. The issue of operationalizing Sherpur in Bangladesh, as a multimodal link under the Protocol, has also been taken up.

(ii) Government of India has proposed to the Government of Bangladesh to consider a direct bus service from Kolkata to Agartala via Dhaka as also increasing the frequency of the Dhaka-Kolkata bus service.

(iii) Access to Chittagong Port.

Myanmar

(i) Implementation of Kaladan Multi-Modal Transport and Transit Project -The Protocols on Maintenance of Administration, for facilitation of Transit Transport and a Framework Agreement for the Project were signed between India and Myanmar in April, 2008. The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) has been appointed as Project Management Consultant by the Ministry of External Affairs.

(ii) Conversion of current border trade into regular trade to enhance trade between North East States of India and Myanmar- In the 3rd Meeting of the Joint Trade Committee held on 14-16 October, 2008, the two sides have agreed to:

- Open the existing border trade centres at Moreh in Manipur and Zowkhathar in Mizoram to normal trade.
- Develop Avankhung in Nagaland as a third border trade centre to begin with and thereafter move to normal trade here as well.
- Expand the existing Indo-Myanmar Border Trade Agreement from the existing 22 items to 40 items.
- Establish banking systems with foreign exchange facilities at Moreh and Zowkhathar to begin with.

(iii) Construction of Rhi-Tidim and Rhi-Falam roads by India in Myanmar to operationalize the India-Myanmar border trading point at Rhi-Zokhawthar - A two member team from RITES met the concerned officials of Myanmar Ministry of Construction on 27-28 August 2008 in connection with these roads. The requirement projected by RITES and agreed by the Myanmar side may result in changes in the DPR prepared by BRO.

Thailand

A high level business delegation from Thailand led by the Thai Minister of Commerce visited Tripura, Assam and Meghalaya during 22-24 June 2007 to explore the investment opportunities in the identified sectors like road, power, tourism, inland water transport, agriculture etc. As a follow-up of this visit, North East India Trade and Investment Opportunities Week was organized by Ministry of DoNER in association with Indian Chamber of Commerce, Kolkata and Thai Department of Trade &

Negotiations from 1-4 October, 2007 at Bangkok. The primary objective of the initiative was to provide a platform to the businessmen and officials of the two countries to zero in the areas of mutual cooperation, potential for investment and trade in the identified sectors and the need to initiate fruitful dialogues. This visit was followed by another visit by a Thai delegation headed by the Deputy Minister of Industry of Thailand to the States of Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam from 9-12 January, 2008 to further explore the areas of cooperation through exchange of information and visits of organized trade, investment & tourism delegations to promote Thailand-India trade and investment.

The Minister for External Affairs had also taken a high level meeting on 31.10.2007 on the Look East Policy with the Chief Ministers of the North Eastern States and the Central Ministries concerned so as to formulate a strategy for a meaningful involvement of the North Eastern Region in the Look East Policy. A number of important issues emerged from this interaction which are being followed up.

Compensatory afforestation scheme

656. DR. GYAN PRAKASH PILANIA:
SHRI LALIT KISHORE CHATURVEDI:
Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government plans to bring 6 million hectares of land under forests in 10 years as part of its Green India Programme;

(b) if so, achievements thereof;

(c) whether Government planned to green 12.6 lakh hectares under the compensatory afforestation scheme but has managed to do so in only 5.32 lakh hectares till April, 2008, achieving 42 per cent of its target;

(d) whether between 2005 - 08 only 24,923 hectares was afforested compared to the target of 2.66 lakh hectares under the scheme; and

(e) whether mandatory compensatory afforestation scheme is in shambles?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI S. REGUPATHY): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Central Government proposes to raise plantations in degraded forest areas over an area of 6.0 million hectares in two phases.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India has introduced "The Compensatory Afforestation Fund Bill, 2008" in Lok Sabha on 5th May, 2008 during the preceding Budget Session of Parliament. After passing of the above Bill, Compensatory Afforestation Fund (CAF) wilt be created and the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) will also be operationalised to enable the Ministry of Environment and Forests to release money to the States/Union Territories for various purposes including plantations under Green India Programme.

(c) to (e) During the period 25.10.1980 to 30.09.2008 an area of 12.72 million hectares was stipulated for raising Compensatory Afforestation. However, the target had become difficult to be achieved due to various unforeseen reasons. As on 30.09.2008, Compensatory Afforestation has been completed over 5,33,107 hectares.